

Section II. **(Amendment to the Claims)**

Please amend claims 1, 3, 9, 10, 12, 15, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 31, 35 and 49 and cancel claims 2, 6 and 22, as set out below in the listing of claims 1-51 of the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A plasma-assisted dry etching method for etching a noble metal material, said method comprising:

contacting the noble metal material, ~~in the presence of an oxidizing agent selected from the group consisting of oxygen and ozone,~~ with an energized plasma composition comprising an etching species from mixture ~~at least one halogenated compound selected from the group consisting of organic halogenated compounds, inorganic halogenated compounds and mixtures thereof,~~ for sufficient time to at least partially etch said noble metal material, wherein the etching species mixture comprises (i) at least one halogenated compound selected from the group consisting of organic halogenated compounds, inorganic halogenated compounds and mixtures thereof, and (ii) an oxidizing agent selected from the group consisting of oxygen and ozone, wherein the energized plasma composition contacting the noble metal material lacks nitrogen- and phosphorous-containing species, and wherein the noble metal material comprises Ir.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim [[2]] 1, wherein the etch species mixture comprise comprises ~~comprise~~ [[C₂H₆]] C₂F₆ in the presence of O₂.

4. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the energized plasma is energized by electromagnetic radiation.

5. (Original) The method according to claim 4, wherein the electromagnetic radiation has a frequency ranging from about 1 x 10³ to about 1 x 10¹² Hertz.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Original) The method according to claim 4, wherein the noble metal material comprises IrO₂.

8. (Original) The method according to claim 3, wherein the energized plasma further comprises a co-reactant to assist in the volatilization and removal of iridium products from the Ir-based material.
9. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 8 wherein the co-reactant precursor is selected from the group consisting of elemental silicon and quartz.
10. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 3, wherein the etch species mixture further comprises ~~XF₂~~ XeF₂.
11. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the oxidizing gas comprises an oxidant selected from the group consisting of O₂, and O₃.
12. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim [[2]] 1, wherein the energized plasma is energized in a downstream microwave processing system.
13. (Original) The method according to claim 12, further comprising the removing at least one iridium product in the course of the etching process.
14. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the halogenated organic compound comprises a compound selected from the group consisting of C₂F₆, C₂Cl₃F₃, C₄F₈, C₅F₈, C₃F₈, C₂Cl₂F₄, C₂ClF₃, CClF₃, CCl₃F and CCl₂F₂.
15. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 14, wherein the halogenated organic compound comprises C₂F₆[[.]] in combination with the halogenated inorganic compound XeF₂.
16. (Original) The method according to claim 15, wherein the energized plasma further comprises reactive species formed by reacting C₂F₆ with elemental silicon.
17. (Original) The method according to claim 16, further comprising the removal of at least one iridium product during the etching process.
18. (Original) The method according to claim 17, wherein the at least one iridium product comprises an iridium-containing composition selected from the group consisting of IrSi₂F₄, IrSi₃F₆, and IrSi₄F₆.
19. (Original) The method according to claim 16, wherein the oxidizing gas comprises O₂.

20. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim ~~[[2]]~~ 1, wherein the Ir-based material is deposited on a high temperature dielectric material or ferroelectric material.

21. (Original) A method of fabricating a microelectronic device structure, comprising:

(a) depositing a noble metal material on a substrate, wherein the noble metal material comprises Ir;

(b) forming a pattern on the deposited noble metal material of a desired configuration;

(c) ~~contacting the deposited noble metal material in the presence of an oxidizing gas selected from the group consisting of oxygen and ozone, with an energized plasma comprising an etching species deriving from mixture, at least one halogenated compound selected from the group consisting of organic halogenated compounds, inorganic halogenated and mixtures thereof, to thereby etch the noble metal material, wherein the etching species mixture comprises (i) at least one halogenated compound selected from the group consisting of organic halogenated compounds, inorganic halogenated and mixtures thereof, and (ii) an oxidizing agent selected from the group consisting of oxygen and ozone, and~~ wherein the energized plasma composition contacting the noble metal material lacks nitrogen-and phosphorous-containing species; and

(d) continuing step (c) for a sufficient time and under sufficient conditions to form the microelectronic device structure or a precursor thereof.

22. (Cancelled)

23. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 21, wherein the etch species mixture comprise ~~[[C₂H₆]]~~ C₂F₆ in the presence of O₂.

24. (Original) The method according to claim 23, the energized plasma is energized by electromagnetic radiation.

25. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim ~~[[22]]~~ 21, wherein the electromagnetic radiation has a frequency ranging from about 1×10^3 to about 1×10^{12} Hertz.

26. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 25, wherein the energized plasma further comprises a co-reactant to assist in volatilization and removal of iridium products from the Ir-based wherein the co-reactant precursor is selected from the group consisting of elemental silicon and quartz.
27. (Original) The method according to claim 21, wherein the oxidizing gas includes an oxidant selected from the group consisting of O₂, and O₃.
28. (Original) The method according to claim 23, wherein the energized plasma further comprises XeF₂.
29. (Original) The method according to claim 26, further comprising removing at least one iridium product during the etching process.
30. (Original) The method according to claim 21, wherein the halogenated organic compound comprises a compound selected from the group consisting of C₂F₆, C₂Cl₃F₃, C₄F₈, C₅F₈, C₃F₈, C₂Cl₂F₄, C₂ClF₃, CClF₃, CCl₃F and CCl₂F₂.
31. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim [[22]] 21, wherein the halogenated organic compound comprises C₂F₆.
32. (Original) The method according to claim 31, wherein the energized plasma further comprises reactive species formed by reacting C₂F₆ with a co-reacting species selected from the group consisting of elemental silicon and quartz.
33. (Original) The method according to claim 32, further comprising removal of at least one iridium product in the etching process.
34. (Original) The method according to claim 33, wherein the at least one iridium product comprises an iridium composition selected from the group consisting of IrSiF₃, IrSi₂F₄, IrSi₃F₆, and IrSi₄F₆.
35. (Currently Amended) A method for removing a noble metal residue from a microelectronic device structure, the method comprising:

contacting the microelectronic device, having deposited thereon a noble metal residue selected from the group consisting of platinum, palladium, iridium and rhodium, with a gas-phase reactive composition comprising (i) a halide component selected from the group consisting of SF_6 , SiF_4 , Si_2F_6 , SiF_2 radical and SiF_3 radical, and (ii) an oxidizing gas selected from the group consisting of oxygen and ozone, in an amount to remove noble metal residue from the microelectronic device structure, ~~in the presence of an oxidizing gas selected from the group consisting of oxygen and ozone~~, wherein the gas-phase reactive composition lacks nitrogen-and phosphorous-containing species.

36. (Original) The method according to claim 35, wherein the halide is selected from the group consisting of SF_6 , SiF_4 , and Si_2F_6 .

37. (Original) The method according to claim 35, wherein the halide comprises SF_6 .

38. (Original) The method according to claim 35, wherein the halide is selected from the group consisting of SiF_2 and SiF_3 radicals.

39. (Original) The method according to claim 35, wherein the halide is selected from the group consisting of SiF_2 and SiF_3 radicals and the halide is generated by reaction of XeF_2 with silicon.

40. (Original) The method according to claim 35, wherein the halide is selected from the group consisting of SiF_2 and SiF_3 radicals and the halide is generated by passing SiF_4 through an energetic dissociation source.

41. (Original) The method according to claim 40, wherein the energetic dissociation source is selected from the group consisting of plasma sources, ion sources, ultraviolet sources and laser sources.

42. (Original) A method for removing from a microelectronic device structure, a noble metal residue comprising iridium, the method comprising:

contacting the microelectronic device structure with a gas-phase reactive halide comprising XeF_2 and an agent to assist in volatilizing and at least partially removing the noble metal residue from the microelectronic device structure.

43. (Original) The method according to claim 42, wherein the agent is selected from the group consisting of carbon monoxide, trifluorophosphine, and trialkylphosphines.
44. (Original) The method according to claim 43, wherein the agent further comprises an iridium halide species selected from the group consisting of Ir(X)_1 , Ir(X)_3 , Ir(X)_4 and Ir(X)_6 , wherein X represents the halide of the reactive halide composition.
45. (Original) The method according to claim 42, wherein, the gas-phase reactive halide composition further comprises a gas phase reactive halide species selected from the group consisting of SiF_4 , Si_2F_6 , SiF_2 radical and SiF_3 radical; and the microelectronic device structure is further contacted with an agent to assist in volatilizing and removing the noble metal residue on the microelectronic device structure.
46. (Original) The method according to claim 42, wherein the agent is selected from the group consisting of Lewis bases and electron back-bonding species.
47. (Original) The method according to claim 42, further comprising disposing the microelectronic device structure in a chamber and introducing a gas phase reactive halide composition selected from the group consisting of SF_6 , SiF_4 and Si_2F_6 that is continuously flowed through the chamber, in combination with an energetic dissociation source selected from the group consisting of plasma sources, ion sources, ultraviolet sources and laser sources.
48. (Original) The method according to claim 42, further comprising disposing the microelectronic device structure in a chamber and introducing a gas phase reactive halide composition selected from the group consisting of SiF_2 and SiF_3 that is continuously flowed through the chamber, in combination with an energetic dissociation source selected from the group consisting of plasma sources, ion sources, ultraviolet sources and laser sources.
49. (Currently Amended) A method for removing from a microelectronic device structure a noble metal residue including at least one metal selected from the group consisting of platinum, palladium, iridium and rhodium, the method comprising:

contacting the microelectronic device structure with a gas-phase reactive composition comprising SiF_4 in a sufficient amount to at least partially remove noble metal residue,

wherein the gas-phase composition further comprises an oxidizing gas selected from the group consisting of oxygen and ozone.

50. (Original) A method for removing from a microelectronic device structure a noble metal residue including at least one metal selected from the group consisting of platinum, palladium, iridium and rhodium, the method comprising:

contacting the microelectronic device structure with a gas-phase reactive halide composition comprising Si_2F_6 in a sufficient amount to at least partially remove noble metal residue.

51. (Original) A method for removing from a microelectronic device structure a noble metal residue including at least one metal selected from the group consisting of platinum, palladium, iridium and rhodium, the method comprising contacting the microelectronic device structure with a gas-phase reactive halide composition comprising a halide component selected from the group consisting of SF_6 , SiF_4 , Si_2F_6 , SiF_2 radical, SiF_3 radical, and XeF_2 , in an amount effective to at least partially remove the noble metal residue; the gas-phase composition (a) further comprising an oxidizing gas selected from the group consisting of oxygen and ozone, and (b) lacking a nitrogen- and phosphorous-containing species.